

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

May 12, 2004
7:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Schiring, Commissioners Bach, Bonincontri,
Mathews, Robertson

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Vice-Chair Lynde, Commissioner Maggi

STAFF PRESENT: Kathleen Burgess, Emil King, Toni Pratt, Art Sullivan,
Department of Planning and Community Development

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Schiring who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Bach, who arrived at 7:04 p.m.; and Commissioners Lynde and Maggi, both of whom were excused.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus.

4. STAFF REPORTS

Kathleen Burgess, Planning Manager, distributed to the Commissioners copies of a memo from City Manager Steve Sarkozy regarding the tent city permitting process.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

6. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS
AND COMMISSIONS – None

7. STUDY SESSION

A. 2004 Update to the Comprehensive Plan
– Urban Design Element

Emil King, Senior Planner, reminded the Commissioners that during the April 21 presentation of the proposed changes to the Urban Design Element, two issues in need of clarification were raised. The first question had to do with the costs associated with wayfinding and gateway

signage. Mr. King said using the Neighborhood Enhancement Program as a gauge, smaller signs generally cost about \$1600, plus an additional \$500 to \$1000 for landscaping. Larger signs can cost as much as \$10,000.

Mr. King said the second question focused on what is being done to incorporate greening and softening features in the Downtown. He noted that for new apartment buildings and condominiums with ground floor retail, there is policy direction to provide softening features. Implementation of the policy direction, however, is not always done in the same manner. For example, the buildings toward the edge of the Downtown tend to have more softening treatments. The buildings along the edges of Downtown have requirements for a 20-foot linear buffer setback that often is constructed to be a green space.

In general there are policies calling for pedestrian-scale lighting, plantings, water features, street trees, street furniture, and different pavement treatments. The preference of the individual developers often comes through in the final product.

Mr. King proposed the addition of a new policy to the Urban Design Element to read “Use urban design features to soften the public right-of-way and sidewalk environment as appropriate. These features include, but are not limited to, street trees, landscaping, water features, potted plantings, pedestrian-scaled lighting, street furniture, paving treatments, medians, and the separation of pedestrians from traffic. There was consensus in favor of the proposed new policy.

Mr. King reminded the Commissioners that during the scoping hearing for the Urban Design Element, a Surrey Downs resident proposed the idea of closing off 110th Place SE at Main Street, acquiring a property on the south end of the cul-de-sac and extending the road through to allow for connectivity from the south rather than from the north. Reasons given for the change included better connection of the single family houses along 110th Place SE to the Surrey Downs neighborhood, and providing a better opportunity for a linear green space along Main Street down to 112th Avenue SE. At that time, the Commission voted to include the issue in the scope of work.

Continuing, Mr. King said before staff had a chance to fully research the proposal, the Surrey Downs Community Club and the 108th Avenue SE Neighborhood Association held a joint meeting where the owner of the property that would have to be acquired voiced opposition to the plan. The two community clubs sent an email to staff indicating that they no longer support the idea. Staff has had follow-up conversations with the property owner and some surrounding property owners, none of whom favor the proposal. Mr. King said in the opinion of staff no additional time should be spent on the matter.

Commissioner Robertson observed that when the issue was raised before the Commission it appeared that everyone in the area was in favor of it and supported it wholeheartedly. She asked what happened. Mr. King ventured a guess that the owner of the property that would have to be acquired was not aware of the proposal initially.

Motion to drop the 110th Place SE proposal from the work plan was made by Commissioner Robertson. Second was by Commissioner Bonincontri and the motion carried unanimously.

B. 2004 Update to the Comprehensive Plan
– Downtown Subarea Plan

Mr. King observed that the current Downtown Subarea Plan dates back to 1979, though there have been several amendments made over the years. Much of the language is outdated,

however. He said he has spent a great deal of time reviewing the recommendations of the Downtown Implementation Plan CAC to determine how they would be best integrated into the plan. As previously directed by the Commission, the contents of the Downtown Transportation Plan will be integrated into the Subarea Plan.

As envisioned by the Downtown Implementation Plan, the Downtown will be comprised of seven distinct neighborhoods. The organization of the plan will need to be revised to reflect that approach. The “great place strategy” will be used as the new goal for the subarea. A background section will also be added.

The Downtown Implementation Plan CAC recommended ideas to increase the supply of workforce housing, develop a series of signature streets, as well as form a network of midblock crossings. Some of the neighborhood districts already have defined characteristics and a fair amount of policy direction. Other neighborhoods, however, have less defined visions and associated policies; more work on some of those districts will be done over the coming year.

Chair Schiring called attention to policy S-DT-2 and suggested that instead of “...Bellevue’s most concentrated...” it should read “the Eastside’s most concentrated....”

Mr. King referred to the section on parks and open space and noted that many of the issues were addressed by the recent update of the Parks and Open Space Plan done by the Parks Department. He said he has spent time working through that plan and picking out the segments that deal with the Downtown for incorporation into the Downtown Subarea Plan. The Parks Department has identified a couple clarifications to make prior to the open house. A master plan for the Ashwood site was completed in 1993 and the Parks Department recognizes that it needs to be updated. The original master plan envisioned a community center function on the site, and the parks Department would like the Subarea Plan language to not be too specific with regard to the use.

Mr. King noted that policy S-DT-25 talks about the open space amenities provided by developers. He said the Parks Department over the years has been concerned that such spaces do not always have the look and feel of being open to the public. The Parks Department wanted language added to strengthen the policy to ensure use of such spaces by the public.

The Commissioners were told that the policies regarding the edges of the Downtown and the transitions to single family needed to be beefed up. Accordingly, the heading of the section was changed and context language was added, along with some new policies. One new policy talks about using green linear buffers to provide a graceful transition between the more intense Downtown commercial uses and the residential neighborhoods.

Mr. King said prior to the public hearing staff will have maps added into the element.

Commissioner Bonincontri called attention to the first paragraph on page 11 of the packet and suggested that something is missing from the penultimate sentence which reads “...continued to expand with new and exciting that are continuing...” Turning to page 13, she noted that the word “policies” should be added as the third word of the second sentence of the paragraph following the goal statement.

With regard to the first new land use policy listed on page 13, Commissioner Bonincontri said the intent of “people orientation” could be stated more clearly.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bonincontri concerning the new policy to follow

existing policy S-DT-22 on page 14, Mr. King said often where there are several smaller lots developed separately the result is a fragmented development pattern. The intent of the policy is to encourage the assembly of land to facilitate more quality developments. He allowed that the policy language could be clarified.

Commissioner Bach referred to the map included on page 29 and asked if the intent is to take the entire southern side of Main Street where there are currently single family homes for development as a park. Mr. King said the Downtown Implementation Plan CAC recommendation was to acquire all of those properties over time. Most of those old single family homes currently are occupied by professional office uses.

Commissioner Mathews called attention to the discussion paragraph following the Urban Design goal on page 17 and noted that something needed to be changed in the last sentence where it reads "...nurture a sense of place in a series Downtown...." Referring to the last sentence of the second paragraph on page 11, he proposed that the phrase "freeway exchanges" should read "freeway interchanges." He further suggested that the flow of the paragraphs on page 10 is not quite right.

Commissioner Robertson suggested that "Significant post-war development..." as used in the second paragraph on page 10 would be better written as "Significant development...." With regard to the new policy following S-DT-22 on page 14, she proposed rewriting the policy to read "Encourage the consolidation of land holdings or coordination of development to facilitate quality development" because neighboring landowners can coordinate and do a project together.

Commissioner Robertson questioned use of the word "playfulness" as used in the Unifying Urban Design Feature paragraph on page 20. She noted that there is no water children can play in in the Downtown core.

Mr. King said he would make the proposed changes prior to the open house.

C. 2004 Update to the Comprehensive Plan
– Housing Element

Ms. Burgess referred to the draft Housing Element and noted that the Overview section was updated to delete items not relating to the way the element is organized, and to revise the Growth Management Act housing targets and housing capacity figures.

With regard to the Neighborhood Quality and Vitality section, Ms. Burgess noted that as neighborhoods change over time their quality and vitality should be maintained, and that served as the impetus for adding the word "vitality" to the title of the section. A new goal is proposed to be added to the section as well.

Ms. Burgess commented that most new housing units constructed in the coming years will be multifamily units. The element therefore talks about the need for a quality living environment for all apartment and condominium residents.

The Commissioners were reminded of the conversation that took place at the Commission meeting on April 21 about healthy changes in neighborhoods and at what point changes should be subjected to more review. Ms. Burgess indicated that discussion language and policy language on the topic was included.

With regard to the Housing Supply section, Ms. Burgess said the proposal includes changing the

name of the section to “Housing Opportunities.” The existing first and third goals were deemed to overlap and thus were combined, and the second goal was reworded to positive rather than negative. The meaning of the three goals was not changed overall. The Housing Opportunities section has also been reorganized to flow better.

A discussion section regarding in-fill housing was added to the section, as well as new policies calling for a demonstration project. In line with direction provided by the Commission, the section has been revised to include the notion of detached accessory dwelling units.

The proposal includes a change to Policy HO-8 to explicitly encourage residential development in commercial zones for a range of household types and income levels in support of the affordable housing goals. As proposed, Policy HO-11 would be moved to the Land Use Element, and Policy HO-18 would be moved to the Environmental Element.

With regard to the Affordable Housing section, the text was been updated to reflect the latest data on affordability and what is being done to meet the affordability goals established by the Countywide Planning Policies. A new policy is proposed which would direct periodic review of the Land Use Code regulations to remove any barriers or unnecessary standards that serve to discourage affordable multifamily housing.

ARCH was a relatively new entity when the Housing Element was last adopted. Ms. Burgess pointed out the need to update the information about ARCH and add a new policy calling for the periodic review of the city guidelines for the Housing Trust Fund to make sure they are in line with what the community wants them to be.

Commissioner Mathews suggested that the policy language should be more specific instead of using the word “periodically.” There was agreement that the interval should be about five years.

Ms. Burgess noted that the Affordable Housing section as proposed also includes a discussion of nonregulatory financial incentives, such as exempting affordable housing from some permit fees and using the state multifamily property tax exemption program. New policy language to that effect would follow Policy HO-29 on page 15 of the draft.

Commissioner Bach asked if the new policy language should be written to include only affordable housing or if it should be more general and include multifamily housing. There was consensus that it should take the broader view.

Ms. Burgess informed the Commissioners that the inclusionary affordable housing program ended in the 90s; as proposed, references to that program will be eliminated.

Commissioner Robertson called attention to the second policy on page 6 of the draft and proposed that “community friendly” should be hyphenated.

With regard to the third policy on page 6, Commissioner Robertson suggested that the policy should be revised to read “In extraordinary instances where proposed houses are substantially out of scale with existing houses, and/or have the effect of blocking light/air to neighboring homes, use factors such as...” There was agreement that it would be difficult to have a measure for the blocking of air and that only light should be mentioned in the policy.

With regard to Goal 2 on page 7 of the draft, Commissioner Robertson suggested that in the changing from a negative statement to a positive one the intent of the goal was changed. She proposed that it read “...do not necessarily have a negative impact on the cost or supply of

housing.” Calling attention to the in-fill housing paragraph on page 8, she suggested that the third sentence should be revised to read “...projects will be limited by pre-determined factors....”

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 31, 2004

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Bonincontri. Second was by Commissioner Mathews and the motion carried without dissent; Commissioner Robertson abstained from voting.

9. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Burgess reported that no date for the Commission retreat has yet been determined. The Commissioners indicated support for June 9 or a Tuesday or Thursday evening in June.

Ms. Burgess said a celebration marking Chair Schiring’s years of service on the Commission is planned for May 26.

10. NEW BUSINESS – None

11. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mary Dore, address not given, said she is the owner of several Downtown properties. She voiced concerns regarding the proposal in the Downtown Implementation Plan recommendation for a one-way couplet in the Downtown on 106th Avenue NE and 108th Avenue NE. She noted that the one-way system that exists in Redmond presents some very real problems, and suggested that Bellevue should be very cautious about stepping into those waters.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Schiring adjourned the meeting at 8:18 p.m.